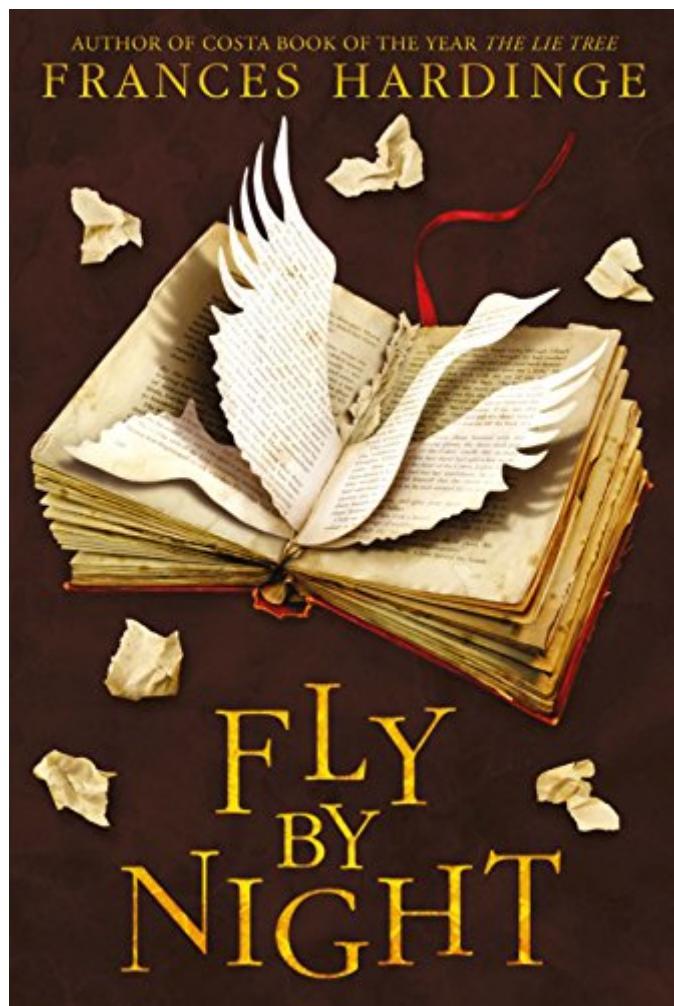


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Fly By Night



Synopsis

Everybody knew that books were dangerous. Read the wrong book, it was said, and the words crawled around your brain on black legs and drove you mad, wicked mad. Mosca Mye was born at a time sacred to Goodman Palpitattle, He Who Keeps Flies out of Jams and Butterchurns, which is why her father insisted on naming her after the housefly. He also insisted on teaching her to read— even in a world where books are dangerous, regulated things. Eight years later, Quillam Mye died, leaving behind an orphaned daughter with an inauspicious name and an all-consuming hunger for words. Trapped for years in the care of her cruel Uncle Westerly and Aunt Briony, Mosca leaps at the opportunity for escape, though it comes in the form of sneaky swindler Eponymous Clent. As she travels the land with Clent and her pet goose, Saracen, Mosca begins to discover complicated truths about the world she inhabits and the power of words.

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Customer Reviews

Originally posted on Goodreads July 10, 2014 Frances Hardinge can WRITE, y'all. I'm addicted to her prose, and while she's more well versed than I might be able to pick out influences in her writing, she feels completely original to me. She's like a reincarnation of Dianna Wynne Jones though she's really just in a class by herself. I didn't fall head over heels for this story as much as I loved *A Face Like Glass* but I still thoroughly enjoyed myself and underlined plenty of very cleverly turned phrases. The setting is something similar to old world England, but quite reinvented. Society is at some unrest with kings and queens, princes and princesses in hiding while various guilds and dukes duke (ha) it out and fight for control of various cities. One guild, the Stationers are in charge of teaching the appointed children and approving the written works. Banned books are burned and even small advertising pamphlets or event posters must be signed off by a Stationer before they can be posted and read. Of course there are political machinations in place which involve an illegal printing press, mysteries, and a murder, all of which our young 12 year old protagonist finds herself embroiled in and solving. I enjoyed the richly developed backdrop, the people and the invented histories all came alive quite nicely. I particularly enjoyed the interesting world of Chough though we only get a glimpse of it in the beginning, and the floating coffee houses and all the other boats and merchants on the riverway in Mandelion. I can't even do it justice, you guys. Hardinge is amazing at weaving fairly complex plotlines in and out and together, and managing to completely surprise the reader. Go on, read it. In fact read this and her others first, and save *A Face Like Glass* for last because it is her best (at least I'm guessing so... I'm about to find out.)

When a child is born in a world that venerates a huge number of saints, the custom is to name it for something relating to that saint, so when a daughter is born to Quillam Mye on the day sacred to Palpitattle, He Who Keeps Flies out of Jams and Butter Churns, this highly literate man names her Mosca (Italian for "housefly"). He doesn't pay her a lot of attention, but does teach her to read and write (which most females don't learn). When she's twelve, four years after his death and the destruction of his books (most of them don't bear the imprimatur of the Company of Stationers, who control all book-publishing in the realm--which rather resembles 18th-century England in most ways), she connects up with the wandering con man Eponymous Clent, and travels with many adventures along the way to the capital, where she finds herself in the midst of a conflict between the Stationers and the Locksmiths. Oh, and along with her she's brought an exceedingly combative goose, Saracen, which alternates between getting her into trouble and getting her out of it. It's a neat book with a lot of original ideas.

Beautiful story filled with words, ideas, ripe glorious description. Such a fun exciting adventure filled with treason and political & religious intrigue.

Really enjoyed this book, and I think the sequel *Twilight Robbery* is even better

A world without books, without letters. This is a story of people who both love and fear books and the power of words. Warriors of words battle with those stuck in the mire of ignorance. A world where the sight of the alphabet is terrifying. Horrible concept for serial readers. A heroine is required to brave this inane unreality. Mosca seems not quite up to the task...just a child and locked in a mill as the story opens. So of course she turns her world upside down, with the help of her goose companion. She manages to elude and exasperate some unforgettably scruffy and dangerously devious characters. She is very often much smarter than the reader. Enchanting. This is a book for grown up and growing up children who love words. There is page after page of words playing games, words woven into puzzles, words conjuring images of mayhem and delightful magic. Like the river that Mosca uses to escape her captors, the words wind and wander into curlicue patterns never seen or imagined before. There are moments when sentences can stop your breath, illuminate your brain, curl your toes. The story is challenging and touching and witty....but it is demanding. It demands your imagination and your dictionary occasionally. It is hilarious and horrifying. It is the kind of book you give an unsuspecting child of any age who wants to read something scary, exasperating, and vivid. It is a multi faceted convex mirror of real life today....without the goose.

One of the wittiest heroines and cleverest fantasies I've read. Perfect for fans of Diana Wynne Jones.

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